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ABSTRACT

This guide discusses the Philosophy of Teaching Scale (POTS) which was developed to define the physical setting of participants' classrooms, and participants' orientation on six philosophical dimensions. The six dimensions are: (1) learning environment and experiences; (2) curriculum; (3) grouping; (4) instructional style; (5) discipline; and (6) evaluation. The POTS has also been used to determine elementary school teachers' perceptions of the ways in which they work with students in their classrooms. The POTS has a potential range of one to five, with one reflecting the most structured orientation and five the least structured. The selection of item content is described. An example of the POTS is included. (RJC)

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A 'PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING SCALE' FOR USE WITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Do elementary schools exist in which a common philosophy of teaching prevails? Some educators believe that is true. School boards or school administrators sometimes strive to promote a particular philosophy in a district or school because they believe it better suits the students' needs. Parents may also advocate one or another philosophy, and they look for a district or school which "matches" their ideals for their children to attend (Palmetier & Thomas, 1977). However, another point of view holds that individual students may need different kinds of teaching, and there should be a choice within a school (Fantini, 1973).

Teachers begin developing a personal philosophy of teaching in their college program (and perhaps even before). All that college students learn through reading, coursework, and observation/participation experiences, contributes to the philosophy which they will each adopt. As teachers, they may be asked by school administrators to incorporate certain content or methods of classroom organization and management into the program. However, in the final analysis, when the door is closed and a teacher is alone with students in the classroom, the teacher's methodology will reflect his/her basic philosophical assumptions (Wersing, 1972).

Most teachers don't think consciously about the type of teaching philosophy they are using. However, teachers are

involved with the problems of teaching and learning (Passmore, 1980), and they can usually describe what they do in the classroom. The following Philosophy of Teaching Scale (POTS) was developed to define both the participant's physical classroom setting and his/her orientation on six philosophical dimensions: (1) learning environment and experiences; (2) curriculum; (3) grouping; (4) instructional style; (5) discipline; and (6) evaluation. The POTS has a potential range from one to five, with one (1) reflecting the most structured orientation and five (5) the least structured. It can be scored by measuring the point marked on the line to one-tenth of a point.

Item content was selected for several reasons. Each topic was noted as important in books related to teaching (Pratt, 1980; Shepherd & Ragan 1982). Each item followed a logical continuum. Items were reviewed by school administrators, teachers, university faculty members, and graduate students. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final scale. The scale was then completed by 94 elementary classroom teachers (Grades K-6) after each was observed teaching in his/her own classroom for 30-45 minutes. Observers reported that the teacher's own perception of his/her practice appeared to be congruent with that which was observed in the classroom.

The Philosophy of Teaching Scale (POTS) has been used to determine elementary school teachers' perceptions of the ways in which they work with students in their classrooms. It has the potential for use in placing students and/or student teachers in elementary school classrooms which reflect a specific teaching orientation.

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Shepherd, G. D., & Ragan, W. B. (1982). Modern elementary curriculum (6th ed.). New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston.

Wirsing, M. E. (1972). Teaching and philosophy: A synthesis. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING SCALE (POTS) Name_____

Mark the point on each continuum which best describes your position.

Background: In what type of physical setting do you typically teach?

1	2	3	4	5
Self-contained		Semi-contained (folding doors with some cooperative activities between rooms)		Open

Comments_____

(1) Who do you think should determine the learning environment and/or learning experiences in the classroom?

1	2	3	4	5
Teacher and Administration; direct learning and behavior		Teacher and student interest to develop experiences within the guidelines of the teacher/schools goals and objectives		Children direct own learning and behavior with teacher assistance

Comments_____

(2) What subjects or skills do you think should be given priority within the curriculum?

1	2	3	4	5
Primary emphasis on Reading, Writing and Math (Basic Skills); clear distinction between subject areas		Integrated (subjects and skills) program; concepts and skills built into program		Child learns through her/his experiences; skills are acquired with facilitation by teacher when the need arises

Comments_____

(3) How do you think children should be grouped for instruction?

1	2	3	4	5
Total Group Paced; all children receive instruction in the same manner		Personalized; some whole group, some small flexible groups, and some individualized instruction		Individualized; each individual working at her/his pace; little or no group instruction; teacher assistance as needed

Comments_____

(4) What instructional style do you prefer?

1	2	3	4	5
Systematic steps toward learning; one best answer, one best way (teacher delegates learning)		Teacher focuses on child developmental level; content built in sequential manner; capabilities developed through inquiry (teacher perceived as facilitator)		Child's interests determine what will be learned and how it will be learned (teacher perceived as coordinator in learning process)

Comments_____

(5) Describe your views concerning discipline.

1	2	3	4	5
Emphasis on standardized rules and regulations (teacher directed)		Emphasis on common set of regulations with self-control as goal (teacher/student cooperation)		Behavior is a shared responsibility of student and others (student directed; democratic)

Comments_____

(6) What method(s) of evaluation do you find most useful?

1	2	3	4	5
Teacher evaluates students with letter grades; group norms are standards for evaluation		Teacher evaluates students on basis of individual performance; students' developmental capabilities are considered in evaluation against standard		Teacher/student joint evaluation; student's own capabilities are standard for evaluation

Comments_____

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